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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 003026

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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
USAID/ANE/MEA
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- Jordan's editorialists and columnists denounced what they saw as U.S. condoning, if not prior approval of the Rantissi killing, linking it to President Bush's response to P.M. Sharon's withdrawal plan. They bewailed Arab weakness and the inability of Arab governments to stand up to the U.S. and Israel, whom they described as pursuing policies that are indistinguishable from each other. The lead story in all papers today, April 20, carry verbatim the Jordan News Agency report on King Abdullah's decision to postpone his meeting with President Bush to the first week of May, as they put it, "until the U.S. stand and position vis--vis issues related to the Palestinian issue are clarified." Another lead story highlights the Security Council emergency meeting to discuss Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Rantisi. All papers also highlight the beginning of Spain's withdrawal of its forces from Iraq.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The American President and the numerous lines and colors"

Columnist Haidar Rashid writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (04/20): "The United States gave Israel the green light to assassinate the Hamas leader, and, a few days ago, the U.S. administration had crossed the red lines of the Palestinian cause when President Bush declared his support for Sharon's plan for withdrawal from Gaza and dropped the most important element of the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, namely the right of return.. The American occupation forces are going to withdraw from Iraq. This is a truth that no two can argue. The Israeli occupation cannot kill the spirit of resistance and defiance in the Palestinians. More killing the Sharon way means for Palestinian determination to resist and fight back.. What is going on in the United States, which is affecting areas of tension and struggle here, is a form of psychological pressure and planning on the basis of the elections. Yet, the U.S. administration's crossing of the red lines in the Palestinian issue with such arrogance and the potential repetition of a similar thing in the Iraqi issue state the President Bush's most important battle [the presidential elections] may not be guaranteed at all."

-- "Helpless even to express pain"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/20): "What is going on in the dark minds of the leaders of Tel Aviv? We do not know the reality of anything. We know for sure that they would not have gone this far had the Palestinian and Arab status quo been different and had the United States not turned into an 'occupations caterer' and the 'thug' of wars, eliminations, assassinations and invasions. We do not know what could be said. Events tie tongues and the humiliation and degradation that suffocate people are blocking the words and prevent them from coming out. The call for patience and forbearance is like pouring oil on a raging fire.. We have nothing but our helplessness to do anything. We cannot even express our pain and frustration. Alas the situation we have come to."

-- "Winning is the George Bush's only concern"

Columnist Yaqoub Jaber writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour

(04/20): "Everything that George Bush is doing these days is designed first and foremost to strengthen his chances of winning a second presidential term.. A man who wants to stay on the throne of the world for another four years to continue his aggressive approach towards people, supported by the neo-conservatives who have made of Israel an idol for their worship and who have ignored even the simplest of human and moral principles in their dealings with the Palestinian cause.. How else do we explain these humiliating concessions made by a superpower to Sharon? How did Bush allow himself to bypass all international resolutions related to the return of the refugees, withdrawal to June 4th borders and considering the settlements as illegal, unless of course his first and foremost concern was to win the vote of the Jewish electors and to use the Jewish American's power and money in strengthening his chances of winning the elections?"

-- "American is being haughty and its enemies are exaggerating"

Columnist Yaser Abu Hilaleh writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (04/20): "By adopting the Sharonic approach of intransigence, President Bush leaves no choice for the Arabs but to surrender or resist, and this is a president who means what he says, even if he was under the pressure of elections. The Arabs and Muslim do not need a public relations campaign led by Al-Hurrah to rectify the image of Sharon, because in their minds he is a war criminal starting with Qibya and leading to Sabra and Shatila, and if there had been any justice in this war against terrorism, Sharon would have been a prisoner in Guantanamo. He [President Bush] is right to belittle the Arabs and the Muslims and place all his eggs in Sharon's basket. Bush knows that Israel is a nuclear and industrial state and part of the American culture and market, while the Arabs and Muslims are scattered and divided and backward.. America cannot be defeated in Falluja, but it can be defeated in Iraq if the battle is prolonged. The Iraqi people realize that much dear blood has been spilt over the course of a third of the century, and that much dear blood is being shed today in battles with a cause, not saving Iraq from Sharon and Bush but rather saving the world from Sharon and Bush."

-- "The position of `we were not aware'!"

Columnist Jawad Bashiti writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (04/20): "A new position is being adopted by the Bush administration vis--vis every crime committed by Sharon, namely the position of `we did not have prior knowledge'. Without declaring its clear support for Israel's assassination crimes, the Bush administration tends to detail and clarify its position by saying things like: Israel has the right to defend itself; whoever is assassinated must have been a terrorist or leading a terrorist group; we urge Israel to consider the consequences of its actions. From such a position, one would conclude that Israel, under the emblem of combating terrorism, has the right to commit assassinations even if the United States did not have prior knowledge of them, because there is no need for that!"

-- "Going back to square one"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/20): "Israel is the one that confirms, in words, in deeds and on the ground, that the conflict is that of existence and not of borders. The American and Israeli stands unite in adopting the idea that the conflict is that of existence, allowing Israel to take over everything, and in so doing the massacres continue, the killing of leaders continue, and the disarmament of the Palestinian people of all the principles of existence continue. Israel and America want the conflict to return to square one as a conflict of existence. They do not want to any options for the Palestinian people and the Arab nation but to accept this clear-cut and flagrant defiance."

HALE